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Common Council President

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15th District Alderman

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**Willie L. Hines, Jr.**  
*City of Milwaukee Common Council*

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS, 2008  
COMMON COUNCIL PRESIDENT WILLIE L. HINES JR.  
**“What Does Leadership Look Like?”**

To the Mayor, fellow Council members, elected officials and friends, welcome and thank you for being here this morning.

I especially want to thank the constituents of the 15th District for re-electing me to the Council, and my colleagues for re-electing me Common Council President.

Over the past term, we have made great strides in moving Milwaukee forward. From the development along KK in Ald. Zielinki’s district to the expansion of Direct Supply in Ald. Puente’s district, the Council has tackled the vital issues of the day, head on.

We have played a significant role in improving and upgrading Milwaukee. Council members have listened to their residents and those residents responded loud and clear in the recent election. Every returning alderman won by a significant margin.

Personally, I have listened carefully to the concerns of my own constituents, as well as to those of my fellow members. If I may be so bold, I believe that I was elected to do this particular job at this particular hour for one reason: leadership.

Our city yearns for leadership, but we must ask ourselves: Do we know what leadership looks like?

Leadership is seldom flashy; it is rarely featured on the evening news or highlighted on the morning talk shows.

Leadership is not always entertaining, but it is always effective.

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Real leadership is steady. It occurs on neighborhood walks and in community meetings.

Leadership is meeting with business leaders and corporate CEO's before they think about leaving Milwaukee, not after the fact.

Leadership is making the extra call. It's going to the extra mile.

And if there is one think that is true about leadership, it's that it happens when no one is looking.

To move the City of Milwaukee forward – to really move it forward – it will take leadership, leadership on all fronts.

That is why I have been elected Common Council President, and that is why our citizens have elected the individuals who sit behind me.

We need action, not empty rhetoric. We need innovative solutions, not sound bites. It will take true partnerships, not press conferences; knowledge, not niceties; hard work, not handshakes.

We cannot be afraid to make tough decisions that will create real solutions and opportunities. We cannot afford to play it safe, or to shy away from progress. We must push and prod our city to harness the talent that exists within it. In short, we must not take for granted the greatness that is well within Milwaukee's reach.

We find ourselves at a critical crossroads in the history of our city. Despite our limitless potential, too many people are barely making it and some are not making it at all. We are failing a significant number of our young people. Nearly half the individuals who enter our public schools do not graduate. Too many children cannot rely on their parents for stability. We have health conditions in our central city that could rival some third-world countries.

Many of our residents are falling deeper into poverty and begging for jobs, while employers search high and low for educated and trained workers. Our public infrastructure is being neglected while maintenance, repairs and replacements are deferred. The property tax burden is hurting residents and alternative revenue streams are necessary in order to ease that burden.

In terms of public safety, I applaud the recent work of our new police chief, but crime and drugs still rule far too many of our neighborhoods.

Without true leadership, how can we turn this city around? The answer is, we can't. But if all of us – from the Common Council to the block watch captain, from the Mayor to the local businessman – if we all commit to leadership that uplifts Milwaukee, we will achieve true greatness.

Others would like to label us. However, we can never allow those nay sayers to define us. My fellow council members and I will not allow that. And if there is one thing I have in common with Milwaukee, it's the ability to overcome misplaced labels and false stereotypes:

- As a product of public housing, people expected me to be disheveled, untidy, sloppy or messy. Instead I became a neat freak. (Those of you who know me know this is true.)
- As a pastor's kid, everyone expected me to be a rebel, but I declined and obeyed the Godly training of my parents.
- Other kids in my neighborhood sold drugs, committed crimes and got involved in destructive lifestyles, but not I.
- As a basketball player at Rufus King high School and Marquette University, everyone expected me to be a dumb jock, but I refused, choosing to study hard instead. In fact, I was the first in my family – or even my extended family – to secure a four-year degree.

Every time anyone has ever tried to label me, by the grace of God, I have managed to ignore, eliminate and block out those misconceptions.

Likewise, I know that every member of this Council has shaken off and overcome false stereotypes. Those experiences have prepared us to lead the City of Milwaukee forward. This group of individuals is well positioned to take on any obstacle. We have the skills and tools to make a real difference. Whether it's Ald. Donovan's passion, Ald. Murphy's intellect, Ald. Davis' wisdom, Ald. Bohl's diligence or the talents of every other member on this Council...

...I will infuse their abilities for a powerful overall impact, as we embrace our true identity together.

I promise that we will not duck, dodge or fail to take responsibility for what we need to do. We will take risks when necessary. We will partner with the private sector. And we will lead this city.

I know that Milwaukee's future is bright because the leaders behind me are committed to working hard every day for a better Milwaukee.

We will put in the hours. We will put Milwaukee first. And together, we will lead this city.

My fellow Milwaukeeans, it is my pleasure and sincere honor to present to you the 2008-2012 City of Milwaukee Common Council. These members will lead us into a brighter future and a better Milwaukee.

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